CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   In an anti-theft arrangement for a vehicular audio component wherein a current vehicle identification number (VIN) is compared to a previously stored VIN whenever the vehicle's battery has cycled and the audio component is disabled whenever the current VIN is not identical to the stored VIN, a method for overriding disabling of the audio component comprising:

storing a preselected component identifier code in non-volatile memory of the audio component;

whenever the current VIN is not identical to the stored VIN, requesting entry of a code into the audio component; and

overriding disablement of the audio component whenever an entered code is identical to the stored preselected component identifier code.

2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising updating the stored VIN whenever the entered code is identical to the stored preselected component identifier code.

3.   The method of claim 1 further comprising:

establishing a database associating a serial number of each audio component equipped with the anti-theft arrangement with its preselected component identifier code; and

enabling authorized personnel to access the database to retrieve their preselected component identifier code upon entry of the component's serial number.

4. A method of disabling a vehicular audio component whenever the component is removed from its vehicle, the method comprising:

(a) storing a predetermined component identifier code in the audio component;

(b) whenever the ignition and component power are on, determining whether the vehicle's battery has cycled since a previous power-up, and enabling the component to power-up normally if the battery has not so cycled;

(c) when battery cycling has occurred, determining whether this is an initial battery connection to the audio component;

(d) if this is the initial battery connection, receiving a first vehicle identification number (VIN) from a vehicle communication bus, storing the first VIN in the audio component and enabling the component to power-up normally;

(e) whenever the battery cycling is not due to the initial connection to the audio component, receiving a second VIN from the bus and enabling

the audio component to power-up normally only when the second VIN is identical to the stored first VIN; and

(f)   whenever the second VIN is not identical to the first VIN, disabling normal power-up of the audio component until an externally entered code input to the audio component matches the stored component identifier code.

5.   The method of claim 4 further comprising replacing the stored first VIN with the second VIN whenever the externally entered code matches the stored component identifier code.

6.   Anti-theft apparatus for a vehicular audio component, the apparatus comprising:

a stored program processor associated with the audio component and including a non-volatile memory;

a vehicle communication bus coupling the processor to at least one vehicle control module for receipt of data messages thereover; and

a data entry element coupled to the processor for transmitting externally entered code words thereto;

the processor operable to store a first vehicle identification number (VIN) and an audio component identifier code in the non-volatile memory, to

request receipt from the manual data entry element of a code word whenever a battery cycle has been detected by reinitialization of the processor and a second VIN read from the bus is not identical to the stored first VIN, and to inhibit operation of the audio component until receipt of a code word identical to the audio component identifier code.

7.   The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the processor is further operable to replace the stored first VIN with the second VIN whenever the externally entered code word is identical to the audio component identifier code.

8.   The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the data entry element comprises manually operable switches associated with a face plate of the audio component.

9.   The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the audio component comprises a radio.